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ABSTRACT

In many big cities, noneducators are being asked to create rescue strategies for the public schools. In Cleveland (Ohio) and Chicago (Illinois), mayors have taken over the school systems, and in the District of Columbia and Baltimore (Maryland), reform boards have been asked to improve the schools. This book is designed to help these noneducators reform urban schools. It identifies the essential elements of reform strategies that can transform urban schools. The first chapter, "Struggling To Improve City Schools," provides an overview of the situation. Chapter 2, "How Different Reform Proposals Are Supposed To Work," analyzes cause-and-effect assumptions that underlie the system-changing reform proposals and examines the proposals' limitations. It concludes that each of the proposals alone is too weak to transform a school system, but that hybrid strategies are promising. Chapter 3, "Agreements and Disagreements on How Reforms Work," shows that rival reforms as different as vouchers and standards share ideas about what makes a good school, and it explains why rival reformers are reluctant to collaborate. Chapter 4, "Ideological Hot Buttons," explores the controversies that prevent collaboration among people with potentially complementary ideas. Chapter 5 , "Creating Reforms That Can Work," provides advice on getting started with school reform, struggling against being overwhelmed, and developing strategies that make a difference. Chapter 6, "Brookings Program Plans," summarizes Brookings plans for a long-term program of studies and assistance to school reformers. Appendix A contains materials for a simulation that can help leaders practice creating reform strategies. The second appendix lists 15 sources. (Contains 4 figures, 7 tables, and 15 references.) (SLD)